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Vermont Joins 31 Other States in Applying for Federal Assessment Grant

MONTPELIER – A 31-state consortium submitted its application recently for a federal grant that would develop a student assessment system aligned to a common core of academic standards. The [SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium](#), or SBAC, formed in December 2009, hopes to receive a Race to the Top assessment grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant, which lasts four years, is worth as much as \$160 million. No more than two grants will be awarded.

“As a governing state, Vermont has an exciting opportunity to develop and implement assessment models that better reflect the progress and strength of our students, educators and their schools,” said Vermont’s Deputy Commissioner for Transformation and Innovation Rae Ann Knopf. “SBAC represents a significant and necessary departure from the dependence on statewide assessments as a primary indicator of education effectiveness.”

Vermont is a governing state in the application, meaning it is an active participant in the development of the policies and framework of the assessment.

The assessment system to be developed by SBAC is tied to the [Common Core State Standards](#), an initiative led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association to create a consistent and clear set of learning standards for K-12 in English language arts and mathematics that all states can use. By the end of 2011, states in the consortium must agree to adopt the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math. States still in the consortium in 2014-15 must agree to use the consortium’s tests as their accountability assessments. The U.S. Department of Education is expected to announce its awards in September 2010.

“We are very pleased to be a part of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, and proud that Vermont will play a leadership role in this project,” said Vermont Department of Education Assessment Director Michael Hock, who also serves on the SBAC leadership team. “The name really says it all. It’s ‘smarter’ because we will be developing next generation assessments that will use new and highly innovative technologies to improve efficiency and accuracy, and to provide greater access for students with learning challenges. It’s balanced because it will provide a coherent system of classroom, district and state level assessments, all

SMARTER Balanced States *States in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (as of June 17):*

Alabama	Colorado
Connecticut	Delaware
Georgia	Hawaii
Idaho	Iowa
Kansas	Kentucky
Maine	Michigan
Missouri	Montana
Nevada	New Hampshire
New Jersey	New Mexico
North Carolina	North Dakota
Ohio	Oklahoma
Oregon	Pennsylvania
South Carolina	South Dakota
Utah	Vermont
Washington	West Virginia
Wisconsin	

aligned with the new Common Core State Standards, that will challenge students to demonstrate what they have learned on test items and tasks that are practical and authentic. And since we will be sharing expenses with 31 other states, we are anticipating considerable cost savings over our current state assessment system.”

Washington State is the applicant state on behalf of the consortium.

“It’s encouraging that so many states from across the country are working together to create an assessment system that aligns with efforts to adopt consistent and clear learning standards, ensuring every child gets the quality education they deserve to be ready for the global economy when they graduate,” said Chris Gregoire, Washington state governor.

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